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THE
VOICE
OF THE
WORKER

'That which is good for the working class I esteem patriotic . . .' James Connolly



THE PARK DANES



MICHAEL HOGAN

JIMMY CARTER



HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

BY Dermot McEvoy

AMONG your friends and acquaintances in Limerick you'll find no one in work who can afford to take more than a two-week holiday. There are, of course, exceptions, some lucky fellows will manage three or four weeks, but even they will spend a week or so about the house or garden painting window sills, rooting out daisies or dandelions from the lawn, or doing one or more of those jobs that the missus, and only the missus, thinks is important.

But who is able to afford 3½ months' holiday on the trot? Why the very people who gave themselves 3 months' holiday last year! I am referring to the TDs you elected, the fellows who predicted that the country would be ruined last June if you did not rush to send them to Leinster House. Yet none of them is going house to house in Garryowen or Southill demanding that you take to the streets to encourage their earlier return to work.

Which leads us to the question: Was the election of Mick Lipper so vital that Bishop Newman had to sign his nomination paper? I'd give a great deal to hear either party — with full benefit of hindsight — tell us how important it all is today.

Why the other Sunday on my own return from a break in London and places east I heard Brian ('No Problem') Lenihan, the Minister for Fisheries, say on RTE radio that there was no need to have the Dail in session passing legislation, that the Government was governing and that was all was needed. If that's democracy, I'll eat my hat — or emigrate like the 14,000 who've done so since January. No mention of the flush of jobs that were to be found to keep those people at home; no mention either of what happened to last year's school-leavers (the ones who are not on official register of unemployed), or indeed what is going to happen to the 50,000 kids who'll have finished schooling this summer. Not a whimper. And while I'm at it let me say there was not one word of explanation about what happened to the 50-mile fishing limit that 'No Problem' Lenihan was to insist on at Brussels.

Perhaps Lenihan did not go to Brussels? Oh, it happened before that someone — in fun of course — put his name in the attendance book at the European Assembly; it was something he discovered only when a political opponent queried his drawing expenses for being there when he was in the lounge of the Burlington Hotel dealing with affairs of national importance in the company of Charles Haughey and some good-looking native speakers. The money was refunded but the most diligent inquiries failed to identify the rascal who for no possible personal gain signed the Lenihan name (Aren't some people the limit?).

THE BUDGET apart, and we've discussed that fairly fully, what did the last session of the Dail actually do? Well, it did NOT abolish ground rents though this was promised by Fianna Fail aspirants at every crossroads. There is an Act which enables a leaseholder to buy out his ground landlord on precisely the same terms as he could (and I did) before the Act was passed. When making the purchase now all arrears of ground rent have to be paid and tens of thousands of people who believed FF are in arrears. Legal costs involved in the purchase will be cheaper (that's the promise) as soon as Court Registrars' offices are staffed and equipped to deal with the rush. As to when that will be, your guess is as good as mine.

I still think I would not have saved any money by waiting. You see I just happen to be one of those eccentric people who actually disbelieves Fianna Fail in everything it promises, or is likely to promise; it is a state of mind I acquired while studying the better-class welshers I came in contact with on *The Financial Times*. My happy-go-lucky attitude to all manner of financial deviousness has often won admiration though hardly from Fianna Fail's trick o' the loop men.

But give the devil his due, there is another Act that FF has

put on the Statute Book; it has revived the breathalyser. In such a way that it licenses a drunk-driver. The Act, assuming it is enforced, allows a motorist to be passed as fit to drive if he has 100mg of alcohol to 100ml of blood; it is 80mg in the North and in the rest of the UK and there are protests there that 80mg is too high. In any country except the Republic of Ireland a driver with 100mg is regarded as unfit to drive.

A graph in the current issue of the consumers' magazine *Which?* shows that at 100mg per 100ml a driver who is not used to drinking, or who has not had a meal, is *four times* as likely to meet with an accident as a driver who has had nothing to drink, and *twice* as likely if he is a seasoned drinker who has had a meal. This Act is no credit to Fianna Fail. It is a licence to kill.

If a drinking motorist confined his killing or maiming to himself I would cavil at the expense the taxpayer was being put to and insist that the fellow's estate be made pay for hospital, morgue, coroner and gravedigger; where he kills, maims or puts at risk innocent passengers or other road users, there should be a minimum sentence of five years and disqualification for life. Too severe? If that's what you think, how about this statistic: More people have been killed on the roads as a result of car accidents in the North of Ireland in the last ten years than have been killed by bomb or bullet. And don't forget the North's 80mg limit against our 100mg!

By the way, I searched the *Dail Debates* in vain for a report of any Limerick TD's comment on the breathalyser Bill. Is drunk-driving of any concern to Bishop Newman? Of course it is, but he does not find time to refer to it in a Pastoral. Is it of concern to his Dail nominee, Mick Lipper? Of course it is, but he hasn't the time either. They ought to find the time; there are enough funerals in the diocese to dictate the need. Meanwhile, I advise friends of mine who come to Ireland to park their cars on Saturday afternoons and stay put where ever they are until Monday mornings. I used to like drinking and driving very much; if I ever drink again. I shall drive again as per usual, but the man at the wheel, as before, will be a taxi-driver with a Pioneer pin. Money well spent.

AMONG the lesser lunacies are the sayings of our trade unionists. For example, John Carroll, vice-president of the ITGWU, commenting on the review of the economy by the Economic and Social Research Institute which noted the re-emergence of emigration, declared he would welcome an increase in our population to five million. It would, he said, give a stimulus to our home industries. (How, in the name of God?) Further he thought we'd have to accept emigration as a normal feature of life. While he did not altogether approve of emigration, the type of social unrest that would arise from unemployment on a mass scale would be 'very worrying'. So, Mr. Carroll, we are to export our problems.

But to what country? What country is crying out for labour, or will be when we have such a handsome exportable surplus? And don't forget to tell us who will feed, house, clothe, educate these youngsters-for-export until they are ready to take up the surplus of jobs abroad. Not only is this all nonsense, it is dangerous nonsense.

More soberly, Dr. Brendan Walsh, author of the ESRI review, said that if we were to cater for the growth of our population without recourse to emigration, we would have to reduce our high birth rate. Without full general acceptance of family planning there will indeed be more unemployment. Already, and without the Carroll baby bulge, we have too many young people chasing too few jobs. Does nobody care?

SOCIALISTS AGAINST NATIONALISTS

Socialists Against Nationalism is a pressure group which exists to oppose nationalism and promote class politics in the Republic of Ireland. At present it comprises the Socialist Party, the British and Irish Communist Organisation, the Limerick Socialist Organisation and individual socialists. Others who agree with these aims are invited to support the campaign.

The group believes that the clear wish of the majority of people in Northern Ireland to remain citizens of the United Kingdom must be respected. Two large scale military campaigns and numerous political campaigns, designed to overcome Ulster unionism, have failed. Their only results have been to worsen the position of the Catholic minority in Northern Ireland, who were treated as a fifth column of Southern anti-partitionism; to disrupt any possibility of united working class politics in the Republic; to cause thousands of futile injuries and deaths and at times to present the threat of a full scale civil war.

The group declares that socialists must accept the present state boundaries in Ireland as a basis for developing socialist politics. The call for a 32 county Socialist Republic is nothing more than the old nationalism newly dressed in a socialist guise.

The group opposes the demand for the British Government to declare its intention to withdraw from Northern Ireland. It also opposes the demand for what amounts to the same thing, withdrawal by the British Government of its guarantee that the constitutional status of Northern Ireland cannot be changed without the consent of a majority there.

The group demands that the Government of the Republic should recognise as legitimate, the present constitutional status of Northern Ireland. To this end it demands that Articles 2 and 3 of the Republic's Constitution, which lays claim to Northern Ireland's territory, be dropped. This is clearly required by the Helsinki Agreement, which was signed by the Republic in 1975.

Nationalism is invariably the ideology of the national ruling class. It unites capitalist and worker in common enmity to other peoples and obscures the conflict between their own

class interests. De Valera's slogan succinctly expresses the effect that nationalism has had in the Republic: "Labour must wait."

Overcoming nationalism in the working class movement means removing a powerful obstacle to socialist politics and overall working class development. The struggle for full employment, for a proper system of health and social welfare and for increased working class power in society generally, could then proceed without fear of ever again being sidetracked into sterile anti-partitionism.

Membership is open to all those who support the group's aims and pay a yearly subscription of £2, (non-earners £1). Organisations may affiliate by paying a yearly subscription of £10.

Two members of each of the affiliated organisations compose the Steering Committee. It is intended to hold a General Meeting this year at which a constitution will be proposed to the members. In the meantime the Steering Committee will co-ordinate activities. All members will be informed of developments through a newsletter. Political organisations which affiliate may claim equal representation on the Steering Committee with those organisations already affiliated.

Write letters to local and national newspapers in support of these policies; put forward resolutions in unions, at Branch and if possible at Annual Conference level, demanding the repeal of Articles 2 and 3 of the Republic's Constitution; organise public meetings of Socialists Against Nationalism; organise public debates with socialists and others who still hold the traditional nationalist viewpoint.

HOW TO JOIN

Write enclosing £2, (£1 for non-earners) to:
The Secretary,
Socialists Against Nationalism,
105 Silloge Road,
Ballymun,
Dublin 11.

Another ex-C.I.A. man, John Stockwell, claims in a book he wrote that the U.S. were deliberately brooking the Russians in Angola and seeking a confrontation. The Americans accuse the Russians of waging war by proxy through the Cubans but they themselves are doing exactly that, using the French, the Belgians, the Moroccans and others. They encouraged the Somalis to invade the revolutionary Marist state of Ethiopia and annex the Ogaden. When the Ethiopians reconquered the Qgaden, the prostitute press of the West tried to portray them as invaders and aggressors. The Americans encouraged separatists in Eritrea in order to weaken and depress the new Ethiopian government. Mobutu is corrupt, venal and wicked; he has systematically murdered whole tribes and tribal chieftains to consolidate his shaky reign.

It has of course a comic aspect. The Americans are thrown back to quoting the C.I.A. whom they quote with the greatest solemnity. It is rather like quoting the Mafia to bolster one's case. The C.I.A. now tell us that the K.G.B. killed Dag Hammarskjold in 1961 and that they and Kennedy knew it then but that the President kept it quiet lest it would block a nuclear test-ban treaty which was being negotiated at the time.

Other frightening disclosures: the Russians have turned the U.S. into a 'spies nest' with hundreds of K.G.B. men at the U.N. working under diplomatic cover; they have pierced the C.I.A.'s computer complex at Langley, Virginia, with electronic devices. We won't sleep safe soon without those guardians of American democracy, the C.I.A., in the bedroom.

However Carter's war noises, provoked as usual by American big business, are serious. Threatening war can lead to war. Bullies are sometimes called to task.

JOHN CASEY.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

There can be little doubt but that the most important development in global politics over the past month has been the American effort to rekindle the Cold War. It was signalled well in advance of any Carter speech. When you see a 'liberal' paper like *The Sunday Times* praising the governments of Iran and Saudi Arabia you can perk up, and when you see the same respectable paper running banner headlines on the activities of the Reds, you can be sure that they're adjusting the liberal cloak.

Carter's attempt to resurrect the phantom of a red encircling menace will fall on fertile ground in the States. They have been well conditioned and they enjoy being cast in the role of the defenders of the wagon train encircled by Red Indians.

The facts have little to do with phantoms. Africa is rich in minerals. Neo-colonialism encourages the 'independence' of African states provided they maintain real control. When Carter coughs Mobutu gets diarrhoea. The Americans and the Western European capitalist countries have sunk money and equipment into the copper mines of Shaba and they are not going to hand these over to any native governments. Carter and his allies have great difficulty in trying to put together a case against the Russians. Colby, C.I.A. director during the war in Angola, the civil war of 1974-75, admitted that the Cubans would not have gone into Angola if the C.I.A. had not been involved in seeking to prevent the victory of the M.P.L.A.

THE PARK DANES

THE DAILY LABOURERS

Regular hiring fairs took place at Stony Thursday Corner, at the junction of Munget Street, John Street and Broad Street. The fairs later moved the short distance to Baal's Bridge until they eventually petered out after the second World War. The agricultural workers, or spalpeens, from all parts congregated with their spades, forks and hay-pikes seeking work. Those lucky enough to be hired were employed and paid by the day. Up to 1940 the labourers were paid at the rate of four shillings a day and their meals. Accommodation could be had in the many crowded lodging-houses in Munget Street and Denmark Street for a shilling a night.

The story of the lives and labour of these wandering workers has never been told. Histories of the working class, have shied away from this subject. But there are some sources available that give a picture of the kind of men who came to work in Park and of their wretched living and working conditions.

In a report on agricultural labourers in the Kilmallock district, presented to the Royal Commission on Labour, in February 1893, an assistant commissioner, W.P. O'Brien, stated that it had become the established usage of the country to obtain labourers annually by immigration from the eastern borders of Kerry, and the adjoining districts of West Cork. He then went on to describe the scene at the Kilmallock Hiring Fair:

These immigrants, consisting of both men and women – the latter greatly the predominant element – usually arrive by train at Kilmallock on certain days in March – notably on the 17th and 25th of the month – when they are met at the

railway station by the farmers from all the surrounding districts, and amidst a scene of unwanted animation and bustle, are at once engaged by them, and then and there borne off to their respective houses.

Labour-hungry spalpeens flocked to the Kilmallock and Limerick fairs. The system was the Irish version of the slave trade and was riddled with class distinction. In a section on social structure in the *Limerick Rural Survey 1958–'64*, Patrick McNabb wrote:

In very large farm houses the workers dined in a separate room. This seemed to cause less friction than the custom in smaller houses where the workers dined with the family in the kitchen. The workers sat at a separate table, were given inferior food, used different crockery and, in some cases, were not given cutlery. After the evening meal, they were not encouraged to stay in the kitchen. During winter-time this caused much hardship, as there was no warm place to rest in the evenings. Even their bedroom was not a refuge, as this was usually an unheated outhouse. One got the impression of a life of hopeless drudgery.

The labourers were not organised and there were few to fight or even speak out for their rights. A brief but revealing part of the report by W.P. O'Brien to the Royal Commission on Labour told all: "Trade Unions: No Existence". Long after 1930, when wages and conditions of work were fixed by law, farmers still continued to pay slave wages.

Some of the workers found employment in Park, where they got big meals and small pay. Women workers from the Abbey, known as "the weeders", also worked there for two shillings a day, with a few glasses of porter thrown in. Two prominent Limerick businessmen started their working careers in Park. Before the second War a wiry youth, who is now a fruit and vegetable dealer, got five shillings for a full week's weeding. In 1940, a ten-year-old boy, who later graduated to become a city jeweller, fared better: he earned a half-crown for a long day's work pulling weeds. He travelled to his first All-Ireland hurling final on this sum, spending two shillings and three pence on his fare.

The Parkmen's aptitude for hard work and his experience on the land discouraged the malinger and the work-shy. Though the class difference between the "Danes" and the labourers was not as pronounced as in rural areas, there was room only for the very best workers. The Parkman expected the labourer to work as hard as he did himself and that meant the highest and hardest of working standards. Many of the workers came from Co. Galway and one of the greatest of these was the legendary figure Stephen Geoghan, better known as "the Galway Man".

Another man who measured up to the stringent requirements was Patrick O'Byrne, more familiarly known as "Gayboy Brynes". Those who remember Gayboy will recall a towering, well proportioned man in a navy-blue suit and polo-necked jumper. He never appeared dirty, even after a hard day's work. His acquaintances attributed his remarkably clean and tidy appearance to his training in H.M. Navy during the first World War. His sense of humour equalled his expertise with the spade or scythe and many a lively gathering was enlivened by his graphic descriptions of sea monsters and shipwrecks in the North Sea. He was never known to lose his temper, even when in his cups.

Gayboy slept out in Plassey Wood during the summer. He rarely worked on Wednesdays, being only too ready to draw his British pension, back a few horses and drink the rest of his money at Jack Walsh's pub in Plassey. He died at an advanced age, in the Soldiers' Home in Cork. His remains were brought back by his friends and buried in his native Doonass. After their hard-working lives most of the travelling agricultural workers died penniless in bleak workhouses and county

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homes. Gayboy was the exception to the general rule.

But perhaps the most famous of all the daily labourers was the Limerick man "Floods" Hickey. Floods was a rugged character who was renowned for his hard work, his hatred of "countrymen" and his affection for the products of Arthur Guinness. He was a familiar figure, not only in Park, but also around the pubs in Pennywell, Broad Street and Munget Street up to about thirty years ago. Wherever he went his lively flow of speech was a popular attraction.

Floods was one of the few daily labourers ever to have a work written in his honour. Danny O'Connell, the Pennywell rhymester, in a mock-heroic epic titled, "Floods", celebrates the wandering, dissolute life of Hickey. In the verses O'Connell gives a Floods'-eye view of the Park Danes, as seen from beneath the cabbage stumps, and provides a robust contrast to Canon Ross-Lewin's pastoral poem, "The Men of Park". In this extract Floods takes time out to vent his spleen on the hapless countrymen, then goes on to describe his work for the Parkmen and rounds off with a litany of his favourite houses of refreshment:

*But there's one thing rises dander
In your humble servant "Floods",
There's no-one safe in any job
With all the country mugs;
They're here from Ardnacrusha,
They're here from Dooradoyle,
They're here from Annacotty,
They're here from Barnakyle;
They walk from Castleconnell,
They run in from Raheen,
They come from every village,
They sneak around for jobs,
They work for half the city rate,
The dirty rotten yobs.
I slaved down in the Tanyard,
And did an honest day,
But a rat came in from Corofin,
And worked for under pay,
When I was fired, I argued a lot,
They said I had no claim,
So I had to leave my place of birth,
To harvest for the Dane.*

*I sowed for Neddy Lawlor,
I mowed for Mick the Dane,
Built a shed for Mike Clancy,*

*With the help of Medium Kane,
I grew plants for Flytail Hogan,
Cleared drains for Yellow Jack,
I fed pigs for Johnnie Cusack,
And milked cows for Monday Mack,
I stole dung from Biddy Wattle,
When she lived out in Rhebogue,
I grew mangolds for Ryan Whistler,
And turnips for Sean Og,
I dug spuds for Sogger Lawlor,
And ploughed for Pa Cunneen,
I threshed for Bawney Penny,
And saved hay for Ryan Bulleen,
I worked for all the Cusacks,
And the Crosses for a while,
But I would not work for Marlo Mullins
For all the wealth of Patsy Doyle.*

*And when the harvest would be over,
I'd bid the Danes farewell,
With their headlands and their lowlands,
I'd pitch them all to hell.
With a thirst just like a limekiln,
I'd sail into the city,
And kick off at Pat McGrath's;
I'd visit all my usual haunts,
Where I spent some happy days;
I'd fall out of Jim Mulready's,
I'd steal up to "Taste me Butter's",
And down to Mrs. Jack's,
I'd ring at "Box of Bones";
If I stood at Quilligan's,
I surely fall at Owen's,
The pint is good at Clohessy's,
And fair enough at White's,
But it's always in condition
At Mick Hishon's and McKnight's.*

This piece of doggerel serves as an epitaph for all the labourers who toiled in Park. They will never find a place in the conventional history books of Limerick. But, as Thomas Gray put it:

*Let not ambition mock their useful toil
The homely joys and destiny obscure;
Nor Grandeur hear, with a disdainful smile,
The short and simple annals of the poor.*

A UNITED LEFT

BY
JOHN CASEY

Most people who regard themselves of the Left would support the concept of a united Left. It is only when the idea moves into a practical proposition and concessions and definite commitments are required that it has always failed in this country. In 1933 the Republican Congress, led by Peadar O'Donnell and George Gilmore, were seeking a united front of labour Cathal O'Shannon of the Labour Party said:

"Was it suggested that they should exchange views with say Peadar O'Donnell?" He had no views and never had any... If anyone wanted to exchange views let them come into the Labour movement".

In other words individuals and organisations support the unity concept providing they are guaranteed the leadership and control of the new movement which only goes to show that combining with such individuals or sects is a waste of time even before it starts.

On the 3rd of February 1976 there was the amusing meeting at the Mansion House where the Left Liaison of the Labour Party, the Communist Party and Sinn Fein (Gardiner Place) came on a platform to introduce the Left Alternative. Tom Redmond (CP) and Noel Browne (L.L.) made the appropriate unification sounds and it was left to the charismatic Eamonn Smullen (S.F.) to scuttle the new vessel in a scintillating speech informing the packed Mansion House that Sinn Fein was an independent party and did not need to unite with any other group or party.

At the time Sinn Fein saw themselves as the Irish Left: a thirty-two county party of republican socialism; what they ignored was that Gardiner Place was a bit like Dublin airport — a place of transit, and that they couldn't tell the vast majority of their country members that they were Marxists because they knew they weren't, while most of their middle class city members were neither republicans nor Marxists, just dilettantes and trendies. In the meantime they have copped on as almost everyone else has that they don't even know where they're going not to mention leading and they have settled down to filching ideas from the B.I.C.O.

So the first question that has to be asked about a united left is what is its purpose. The necessity is obvious: we have the weakest and most fragmented left in Europe, something that is neither sensible nor desirable. Secondly, we have no party of the left with a bank of theory, a clearcut socialist philosophy and a vision of itself and of the future. We have a relatively big party of social opportunists with a dearth of socialists, a communist party that is introspective, sterile and lacking in ideas, and some groups and parties producing theoretical papers and journals but lacking any real following.

There can be little doubt but that the essential ingredient in a new socialist party is discipline and structure and the submergence of personalities. The left in Ireland has been bedeviled by personality cults. Republicanism, with its secret cells, its military command structure, its subservience to its military wings and to right wing I.R.A. leaders, has had a profound backward and retarding influence on the growth of socialism. The rhetoric of the republicans has diverted many from socialism to the befuddled philosophy of the Bodenstown bates and sterile nationalism. Socialism has been the handmaid of nationalism when it should have been the reverse. Many, some belatedly like Noel Browne, have come to realize what an obscurantist and crippling ideology—if it could even justify the word—republicanism has been.

But what is, or what will a united left be. It is easier, like Doctor Samuel Johnson when he was asked for a dictionary definition of a terrier, to say what it will not be. It will not be launched with a flourish of trumpets. It will not be a platform for political prima donnas and megalomaniacs and it will happen rather than be brought about. The Socialist Labour Party will fail because it is a club for malcontents, drifters and four or five types of Trotskyite polemicists. There is no unity

of goal or philosophy; they are united only in their disputation and discontent.

The left has always attracted its share of malcontents and maladjusted activists and Limerick with its tradition of aggressive Catholicism has been a cockpit in the past few years for a surprising number of political eccentrics who have caused confusion as is their wont. These people are no good to any cause; they simply use a political organisation as a substitute for the confessional or the psychiatrist's couch. It is the same way with the political parties: the schizophrenic Sinn Fein, with its two feet, the Marxist foot and the republican one, each kicking in different directions, could hardly be seen as an organisation with its house in order. But then it is only common sense that a real opposition to the capitalist parties will not grow in confusion or in pique but in knowledge, and the conspiracies and organisational penetrations of republicans will avail them nothing in the final analysis. The Officials took over the Resources Protection Campaign from the left wing labourites and the communists some years ago and all they did was to give it the kiss of death. The Resources Protection group was articulate opposition to capitalist mining interests until the dead hand of republicanism stilled that voice. No one has any great illusions about recruitment to a new party; there are no great flocks of hungry sheep on the hills awaiting any new party or new Jerusalem rather there are a few hundred old hard-core activists waiting for some sensible movement they can support.

People who have left the Labour Party are still waiting for a socialist party to support. So what we foresee in the course of time is the emergence of a small united party responding to demands to fill a vacuum with a clearcut policy of responsible socialist policies developing along the lines of the Euro-Communist parties. Before a party can come into being there must be a need or a solid body of theory to which it can explain the reason for its being. With regard to popular demand for a progressive socialist party it can honestly be said that there is none whatever. The people's experience has been fifty years of paternalistic politics: Fianna Fail fit the bill best as a benevolent Mafia; if you pay your subscription, don't rock the boat and support the local mafiosi; the party will look after you and yours. This is the only politics they know and they are happy with it. However, as the electorate becomes better informed and more educated they become accordingly more demanding.

If we postulate the need for a united left merging into a party, it must be formulated more on the necessity to rationalise the confused and fragmented Irish left and on the base of a corpus of theory and ideology that demands a party, than any overpowering demand from the people for the formation of such a party. The most stimulating and frequently controversial theoretical work in politics in Ireland has been done by the B.I.C.O. during the past ten years. They have tilted at ossified national shrines of belief and poked the sacred cows into the light of day. They have questioned republicanism, Roman Catholic nationalism, put forward the proposition that the Protestants of Northern Ireland have a right to declare themselves a separate nation and should not be coerced or inveigled into a 32-county state, brought a Marxist

analysis to Irish history and contemporary politics. They have done original research on the writings of Connolly and on crucial periods in his life and in Larkin's and brought new light to bear on the Eastern socialist states. Their work deserves recognition and support.

Finally, we have to look at the parties and groups from which a united front would be formed. The moment of truth, and we will try to be honest and fair: The Labour Party, as the third biggest party, has no desire to go into coalition with anybody other than Fianna Fail and Fine Gael.

(ii) Sinn Fein see themselves as the top dog of the Irish Left and would like people to believe it, and in the meantime will subvert all the other left wing groups.

(iii) The Communist Party of Ireland have been asleep for forty years and should not be disturbed.

(iv) The Socialist Labour Party will have to split in the time honoured way before the individual members, some of them solid activists, can hope to make a worthwhile contribution. It makes no great difference whether or not that the Trotskyists will eventually wreck the party.

(v) The I.R.S.P. Well they are waiting for the gunfight at O.K. Corral.

(vi) The Socialist Party of Ireland is a responsible little party involved in progressive and intelligent politics.

(vii) The B.I.C.O. are the think-tank of the Irish Left, something that has been wanted for fifty years.

A DIRGE FOR PARNELL

BY MICHAEL HOGAN – THE BARD OF THOMOND

Call off the dogs, the prey is down—
Fierce and furious was the chase.
Ireland's King, without a crown,
Lies bleeding in the desperate race.
Dire was your doom, Parnell the Good,
Tho' your mighty courage had no bounds,
Yet, like Acteon in the gloomy wood,
You are mangled by your own base hounds.

These hounds you so pamper'd and loved to feed,
Have torn your vitals, flesh and bone;
They made every vein in your bosom bleed—
Those hounds that you trusted and called your own.

Call off the dogs, the race is done—
Let Erin note the gloomy tale;
A doleful fact that sire and son
Thro' unborn age shall bewail.
Hold the curse and crush the groan;
Be his poor human faults erased,
But let his life on his cold grave-stone
With the drops of his bleeding heart be traced.

Call off the dogs from their gory game,
His soul's last sigh on their lips is fresh;
Their fangs are red with his brave heart's stream,
And their maws are full of his panting flesh.

Parnell is buried, and Erin is dead—
Sound the dirge to earth's farthest bounds—

Erin's chieftain—England's dread,
Was mangled to death by his own base hounds.
Call off the treacherous whelps and whips,
There's no more game on the harvest plain.

The land is dark with a strange eclipse,
For slavery's gloom has roll'd back again.

In every age, in every clime,
The world has looked on splendid men,
Not for their gifts or parts sublime,
But watching to detect a sin.
Did not the sun appear so bright,
His spots so dark would not have been;
And had the snows not looked so white,
A stain could not at once be seen.

But be he as white as winter's snow,
And look as bright as summer's sun,
There is a truth that all may know,
"There's no one perfect; no, not one!"—
A truth since human nature's birth,
Which if but practised as 'tis known,
No erring creature of this earth
Would at another cast a stone.

Parnell is dead, the dogs are fed,
And still they are yelling for more prey;
Since Ireland's proudest dream is fled,
Now let them eat his buried clay.
There's no relief in fruitless grief
For our lost Leader, brave Parnell;
But think of those that slew the Chief,
Those greedy bloodhounds, mark them well.

The prince of the people's hope is dead—
Ring his knell to the Empire's bounds;
From city to city let it be said,
Parnell was slain by his own base hounds.

Call off the dogs, the hunt is done!
They did their brutal business well—
They murdered Ireland's truest son,
Her wisest Tribune—the brave Parnell.

THE REQUIEM

Let him rest inside Death's portals—
Leave his faults to God alone—
He but erred like other mortals,
None but sinners cast the stone.
October, 1890.

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poems

SONG OF THE FOXHUNTER

KEVIN O'CONNOR'S BALLAD, DEDICATED TO A MAN HE MET ON A RECENT VISIT IN TIPPERARY:

'Ah – got him –
Clever he was – but got all the same
coming through on his usual run
with the hounds behind him, their
noses wet with the sweet smell of him and
their legs out, giving good tongue

And look at him now, stranded numb
on that band of wire, swinging like a highwayman
His eyes like marbles popped from a child's thumb
the bladder falling through the rip in his stomach
Not that I did that – no he was stopped
by the hounds as he thrashed in the wire
Alive he was then – and Christ what a fighter
And looka – see where the steel's bit through
at the height of his exertions
he did that too . . .

He musta died after that, then . . .
no heart to go on
Feel him there, now – still warm
with the alarm of his running
(The last that he heard was the yelps of the dogs)
Poor old bugger of a fox
You wouldn't outwit me, Thady Shinners
I that stays out at night watching you in your manners
Gliding across fields like a speck of the moon on fallow and fern
looking after your young
(a rat or a black crow, hooded
always the first food . . .)

I've seen you on that, coming-in
on a circle, and the crow thinking
you had something for him –
What you had for him
Was what he had for you

So don't I know then how you gather
working out and around and closing the circle
laying-up in the day and mc'ing by night
rapparee rover, rat-lover and fowler
come now to me, Thady Shinners your lover
I'll empty your guts right outa your stomach
and clean your pelt up like your mother would do it
– then off to the Continent glistening all over
your russet brown hide will adorn some other
who never saw you slink from cover to cover
nor mating by moonlight, nor nose deep in plover
more beautiful you, than she can be ever
no matter how much money
is spent on
her back.

by
KEVIN O'CONNOR

Quick now while I bag you
bend over, good feller
Someone is coming and I'm not one for arguing
with huntsman or townie who say I am cruel
to fix you like this with the aid of me cunning
slip knots on steel strands and your own moving terror
brought you to this – in the run of your error
you came unto me
Thady Shinners
Foxhunter . . .

MONUMENT SUNDAY

It is not that one prefers Green to Red
Or Red to Green. Through earth that is
Black and Red and Green – the slaughtered sing
their way: tra-la, tra-la through the roots of violets
Whose colours emboss the evening we crossed the hoary
Thames
into Whitehall

(Imagine us crossing by boat and torch as the Romans did)
You took my hand and pointed out the spectred lights along
the Mall
And in Whitehall
The white stalk based with wreathes was monument
Wreathes red and green
And men in the park full of rheumy-eyed seeing
History is a crackle in old mens' throats
(In that time my heart lies still)

Repairing to watch in another part
the straggle spilled down Camden Town
'Against British Presence in Northern Ireland'
Leaving us transfixed between harp and crown
Or put another way – stuck between Green and Red
Only able to utter to a dawdling seller
Had there been such
'A Poppy – one for all the dead.'

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